

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRAGUE 02163 261123Z

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8706

S E C R E T PRAGUE 2163

EXDIS

FOR ARMITAGE FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CZ, US

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE EFFECT OF SHARING VOA/RADIO FREE EUROPE
FACILITIES

REF: STATE 195846

1. EMBASSY VIEWS ON ANY TRANSMITTER-SHARING ARRANGEMENT BY
VOA AND RFE HAVE NOT CHANGED SINCE AMBASSADOR SHERER'S
DECEMBER 20, 1974 LETTER. TO REITERATE BRIEFLY POINTS MADE IN
THAT LETTER:

A) REF IS CONTINUING FAVORITE BETE-NOIRE OF CZECHOSLOVAK
MEDIA, AND ARTICLES AND "EXPOSES" APPEAR REGULARLY; VOA DOES
NOT AROUSE THIS DEGREE OF HOSTILITY AND IS RARELY MENTIONED.

B) RFE IS JAMMED AND RARELY CAN BE HEARD IN PRAGUE: VOA IS
NOT JAMMED.

C) VOA IS LISTENED TO, AND BELIEVED, BY A NUMBER OF CZECHO-
SLOVAKS (INCLUDING SOME FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS); RFE'S
CREDIBILITY AMONG CZECHOSLOVAKS IS AT BEST QUESTIONABLE.

2. WE CONTINUE TO FEEL THEREFORE THAT TO INITIATE A LINKAGE BETWEEN
VOA AND RFE WOULD HAVE POTENTIALLY UNFORTUNATE CONSEQUENCES.
ESPECIALLY, IT WOULD DILUTE THE IMPACT OF VOA ON ITS CZECHOSLOVAK
LISTENERSHIP. IT WOULD ALSO OFFER GOC THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAR VOA
WITH SAME BRUSH WHICH IT HAS USED ON RFE, AND TO LINK VOA,
THROUGH RFE, TO THE CIA.

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PAGE 02 PRAGUE 02163 261123Z

3. WE ARE THUS FORCED TO OPT FOR THE FIRST ALTERNATIVE (A) LISTED

IN PARA 4 REFTTEL. FIVEN THE DIFFICULTY OF RECEIVING RFE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA TODAY, AND GIVEN THE IMPORTANCE OF VOA TO U.S. INTERESTS HERE, ALTERNATIVE A CERTAINLY PRESENTS THE LEAST RISKY CHOICE.

4. OUR IDEAS ON THE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS CONTAINED IN PARA 7 FOLLOW:

A) ANY CZECHOSLOVAK DECISION TO JAM VOA BROADCASTS WOULD PROBABLY BE A REFLECTION OF OTHER ISSUES IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. SHOULD OTHER FACTORS DICTATE SUCH A DECISION, HOWEVER, SHARED FACILITIES WOULD PROVIDE A PLAUSIBLE (TO THE GOC) JUSTIFICATION.

B) AT LEAST IN THE PRESENT CLIMATE OF CZECHOSLOVAK MEDIA TREATMENT OF U.S., ANTI-VOA PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN WOULD BE ALMOST CERTAIN AND SHARED FACILITIES WOULD OF COURSE ADD CREDIBILITY TO SUCH CAMPAIGN.

C) THE FACT OF SHARED FACILITIES BY ITSELF WOULD PROBABLY NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANTLY ADVERSE EFFECT ON BILATERAL RELATIONS, WHICH ARE PRETTY MUCH AT THEIR NADIR ANYWAY. IT WOULD, HOWEVER, CONSTITUTE AN ADDITIONAL IRRITANT.

D) WE THINK THE GOC, BY ITSELF, WOULD HAVE LITTLE INFLUENCE IN 3RD COUNTRIES WHERE POTENTIALLY SHARED VOA TRANSMITTERS ARE LOCATED. THEY WOULD CERTAINLY, HOWEVER, ACT IN CONCERT WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND THE REST OF EASTERN EUROPE IN SUCH AN EFFORT.

5. DEPT PASS INFO BUCHAREST, BUDAPEST, MOSCOW, MUNICH, SOFIA AND WARSAW.
PERRY

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